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ABSTRACT

Language-disabled students who have experienced difficulties in the process of language acquisition and who may show talent in some academic areas yet fail miserably in others are increasingly able to attend college because of "open door" policies. How will colleges traditionally rooted in textbook-centered lecture courses deal with the language-disabled student? Several possible program organizations exist that involve learning laboratories which provide diagnosis, remediation, counseling, and tutoring by both subject-area instructors and peers. A varied media format of instruction is suggested to meet a variety of learning styles. Services to the faculty in the area of group reading scores and evaluating textbook readability are suggested. Colleges should accept responsibility for the language-disabled student so that the "open door" does not become a "revolving door." (MKM)

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THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT

or

WHY COULDN'T THEY JUST HAVE LEFT THINGS AS THEY WERE

The Compensatory Effort in Higher Education

1A 1 This is Sam. Take a good look. You might not recognize him, but take a good look anyway.

1B 2 In a few years he's likely to turn up as a freshman on your campus.

2A 3 Or maybe he already has. . .

2B 4 Sam is an "LD"; he has a problem fashionably referred to as language disability or learning disability (take your choice).

3A 5 A language disabled student--a Sam--is one who, for one reason or another, has experienced difficulties in the process of language acquisition.

3B 6 Like Sam, he may show talent in some academic areas and fail miserably in others. He has a good mind, but he might excel in chemistry and hopelessly struggle through formal English with failure after failure.

4A 7 The Sams of this world irritate teachers. They sometimes earn a college degree (or two) without being able to compose a simple business letter or read a business monograph. And the public points an accusing finger at US.

4B 8 There are more Sams in schools than ever before.

5A 9 Why? No one <u>really</u> knows.

5B 10 McLuhan suggested a decline in the print culture. In any kind of competition with the "electric drama", reading does come in a rather poor second.

6A 11 In any case, changes in educational philosophy have made it possible for more and more Sams to graduate from secondary schools.

6B 12 In Texas, Plan A provides a special curriculum which offers success to LD's,

7A 13 and many of the LD's who have experienced such "success" are encouraged to try college.

7B 14 Someone has compared modern times with the Renaissance in terms of general and comprehensive change.

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8A 15 Changes are occurring in education, too, at a rate that is something less than phenomenal.

8B 16 Most of us are familiar with the "open door". We don't need to be reminded that it beckons to all the Sams as well as the more traditionally endowed students.

9A 17 Without arguing philosophy, we could probably all agree that every citizen has the right of access to public institutions--even the institutions of higher learning Sam has the right to try.

9B 18 With that in mind, consider the implications of another revolution in higher education: an attitude revolution.

10A 19 The old ivy league concept was to flunk as many freshmen as possible.

10B 20 Modern colleges strive to help as many as possible

11A 21 learn as much as possible.

11B 22 The open door and the promise belong as much to Sam as anyone else.

12A 23 The question is: What can we do for Sam beyond the magic door? Or what is being done for Sam beyond the magic door?

12B 24 If you were able to ask the average Renaissance man how he felt about the changes that were going on around him,

13A 25 the chances are his response would be, "What changes?"

13B 26 Many college instructors would also ask--"What revolution?" --"What changes?" Some of us are still looking at the present through the rear-view mirror.

14A 27 But ignorance did not provide the Renaissance man with immunity to change. It won't insulate a modern college instructor, either.

14B 28 Considering the evidence available, it's probable that LD's will be invading college campuses in such large numbers that traditional attitudes will be impossible to maintain.

15A 29 Traditionally, higher education has been rooted in communication skills--textbook centered lecture courses.

15B 30 The rear-view mirror keeps getting in the way.

16A 31 No argument intended; traditional methods are certainly appropriate for many students. But what's to be done with the large numbers who have communications problems and have come to claim the promise?

16B 32 "For new we see through a glass, darkly." There are no sure recipes for success, but it's certainly time to consider some of the possibilities.

17A 33 Many colleges and universities have already quietly broken with tradition to offer formal remediation in reading and writing.

17B 34 The community college, for the most part, has approached the question aggresively, very often through special divisions functioning under various names--Developmental Studies, Guided Studies, and so on, but the operations, regardless of the label, are basically remedial in nature, usually with a special concern for communication skills.

18A 35 Typically, no one anywhere quite knows what to do with language disabled students, but they are sure to wind up in Developmental Studies (or whatever it might be called) as they are shuffled around on a campus.

18B 36 In 1973, Dr. Melvin Howards of Northeastern University, Boston, said in a talk to a group of educators that he seriously questioned the possibility of remediating LD's at the college level.

19A 37 But out of sheer necessity, we continue to try. . . The effort at Richland College in Dallas, Texas, is not unusual in its intensity, as community colleges go.

19B 38 The reading program, for example, is a skills centered, totally individualized program.

20A 39 Students are diagnosed in terms of specific reading skills,

20B 40 and a reading profile is drawn up for each student.

21A 41 On the basis of the profile, a program is designed resulting in a contract concerned with the development of specific skills,

21B 42 and Sam begins to work with equipment and materials to "get at" weaknesses in a reading profile.

22A 43 At the end of the process, students are retested, and, if necessary, recycled to strengthen skill development.

22B 44 So what's new, you ask? Pretty ordinary stuff.

23A 45 Well, the program may be somewhat unique at the college level in that it is rooted in a skills sequence,

23B 46 which is tied to a series of behavioral objectives,

24A 47 which are tied, in turn, to performance criterion tests--locally developed with mature students in mind.

24B 48 When the classic "learning loop" of individualized education finally "snaps shut" under such circumstances, skill development has been mastered with some confidence.

25A 49 The results of this program are "hopeful". It's appropriate to say that in deference to the tradition of scholarly caution.

25B 50 In any case, with severely disabled college students, the process is, at best, a slow one--sometime a painfully slow one. But for Sam and the others like him, time has run out.

26A 51 The last line was "lifted" from a "B" prison movie starring Humphrey Bogart. But in spite of its trite quality, it contains some truth.

26B 52 For many disabled students, the "open door" is a "revolving door". Falling short of that mysterious status we call "average", LD's are forced to repeat developmental courses, such as reading, any number of times. Where would they go?

27A 53 "If a student can't handle my textbook, he doesn't belong in my class!" That might be a history instructor, a biology instructor, a sociology prof. It reflects a fairly common attitude.

27B 54 With all the possibilities exhausted, the Developmental Studies Program becomes the terminal effort for many students.

28A 55 It is one of the tragedies of higher education that students with good minds reach a "blank wall" upon completion of Basic Reading 090.

28B 56 There's no reason why the promise shouldn't be as valid in history or English or in biology or sociology as it is in developmental courses.

29A 57 Since the problem is basically one involving communications disorders, a team approach seems to be suggested as a means of broadening the possibilites for disabled students.

29B 58 Faculty services, as a facet of the Reading Program, hold the potential of defining the limits of the problem in rather specific terms.

30A 59 At Richland College, for example, the character of faculty services is three-fold.

30B 60 Upon the request of an instructor, a group reading test is administered to those classes selected by the instructor.

31A 61 Test results are interpreted for students at a subsequent class meeting, and

31B 62 the instructor receives a group data sheet which contains individual scores as well as group statistics such as mean reading level.

32A 63 The second step involves textbook readability.

32B 64 The Dale-Chall Readability Formula has been programmed for the computer in the Dallas County Community College District and a paraprofessional can analyze a typical textbook in an hour.

33A 65 In the final phase, a reading specialist and the instructor meet to explore the implications of the information.

33B 66 Confronted by the figures in a typical situation, it is difficult for even the most conservative instructor not to develop some sensitivity to the frustrations of disabled students. It would be an understatement to say that an occasional conscientious teacher is overwhelmed.

34A 67 Given the information to work with, it is possible to offer help through realistic reading assignments, a change in emphasis away from a textbook, multiple adoption of textbooks, and so on. Few college instructors do any of those things, but in a dignified insurrection such as this, there is some obligation to point them out as possibilities.

34B 68 Of course, every student is ultimately responsible for his own success or failure in school.

35A 69 Learning, by its very nature, must be deliberate; one must want to do it.

35B 70 Even a disabled student must recognize his strengths and weaknesses and be deliberate in his approach to school.

36A 71 At Richland College, the Center for Independent Study--"Big CIS"--provides opportunities for realistic self-assessment as well as the development of skills.

36B 72 The Center for Independent Study is an arm of the Developmental Studies Program offering informal services to students through a staff of professional instructors, paraprofessionals, and peer tutors.

37A 73 Very nearly every major instructional and counseling program on campus is "plugged into" the Center, providing special expertise with both academic and psychological problems which seem to demand a team effort.

37B 74 Certainly the Developmental Studies Division is an integral part of the self-help effort, providing consultant input in dealing with

38A 75 reading disability,

38B 76 writing problems,

39A 77 and basic mathematics skills.

39B 78 With that broad base of operation in mind, consider the potential of a "Big CIS".

40A 79 A minute or so ago the necessity of a deliberate and realistic self-analysis was emphasized as a starting point for an LD student.

40B 80 Through the Center for Independent Study a very useful tool which promotes self-assessment--cognitive mapping--is available without charge.

41A 81 The cognitive map, developed by Dr. Joe Hill, employs computerized analysis of responses to a questionnaire to "map" a student's learning style.

41B 82 A counselor is available to interpret the results in individual conferences.

42A 83 Knowing his learning style, a student can make intelligent choices of whether to

42B 84 read or

43A 85 listen to tapes, or

43B 86 see a movie

44A 87 or select some other sensory approach in order to understand a concept.

44B 88 Mapping of cognitive style may point out the possibility of difficulty with reading assignments in textbooks, or suggest, perhaps, a potential problem with lecture based courses.

45A 89 Weaknesses may then by further explored through diagnostic testing to assess reading and writing skills. Diagnostic tests are available on a voluntary basis although the program is flexible enough to permit instructor referral.

45B 90 In either case, the reading and writing profiles resulting from these tests are interpreted on an individual basis by qualified specialists.

46A 91 When these tests are requested on a group basis, by the way, the testing is coordinated by CIS.

46B 92 Psychosensory testing--screening using audiometer and telebinocular--is available as needed by individual students.

47A 93 Obviously, such diagnostic information would be totally useless without some avenue of follow-up.

47B 94 A student who lacks basic reading skills or demonstrates specific weaknesses in reading should be offered the means for correcting that weakness. It's a part of the promise.

48A 95 Minor problems can be handled on an informal basis with the student working on an independent basis under the supervision of staff reading specialists or Center staff.

48B 96 Generally speaking, "drop-in" students need a little encouragement to complete independent projects. But fairly intensive one-to-one instruction is so appealing to most students that, if it is available from time to time, interest is not difficult to maintain.

49A 97 Severely disabled students who turn up in this screening process are generally counseled into the kind of long-range developmental program described earlier.

49B 98 In the mean time, the fact that, for many, basic credit courses must be dealt with on a day to day basis cannot be forgotten.

50A 99 Meaningful, practical assistance can be offered to LD students for immediate application in content areas.

50B 100 For example, CIS offers three possible approaches for individual tutoring.

51A 101 The first, and most spectacular, is tutoring by professionals in a host of subjects--biology, chemistry, physical science,

51B 102 economics, writing,

52A 103 English, and speech,

52B 104 mathematics, and accounting. The service is free and is available on an appointment basis.

53A 105 Group tutoring--<u>peer</u> group tutoring--is underway in history and English and will be expanded to other areas.

53B 106 Finally, the Center operates a tutoring bureau which makes available qualified student tutors in most subject areas.

54A 107 All tutoring services are free with the exception of student assistance for which there is an hourly charge payable to the student tutor.

54B 108 The professional tutors, all of whom have bachelor degrees, at least, are sensitive to communications difficulties and frequently counsel with communications specialists concerning workable instructional techniques for disabled students.

55A 109 Not infrequently sympathetic classroom instructors are deeply involved with disabled students and contribute in meaningful ways to a team effort.

55B 110 These instructors can be found doing things like giving tests orally to students who do not have the writing and reading skills necessary to deal with a printed exam.

56A 111 Out of a genuine human concern, some instructors will tailor assignments to take advantage of individual strengths and avoid bending an LD "completely out of shape".

56B 112 Many textbooks, for example, have been recorded and are available on tape. Why wouldn't it be acceptable for a disabled reader whose chief learning mode is the audial mode to "read" his assignments by listening to tape?

57A 113 A student who cannot read is functionally blind; he should be treated as a blind person while we attempt to develop the basic reading skills necessary for survival in the academic world.

57B 114 In a traditional academic environment most academicians want no part of the problem. Flexibility in an instructor is treasured and sometime taken advantage of by those who are attempting to guide disabled students through the academic "games".

58A 115 Although some wouldn't agree, there's really nothing illegitimate in offering informal counseling to assure the scheduling of classes with flexible instructors; it's part of the team effort--part of the "game".

58B 116 Nor is it heresy to crusade for alternative modes of instruction on the college level. As a matter of fact, if you take a look at your neighbor, you might find that it is already being done next door.

59A 117 At Dallas Baptist University, the entire freshman curriculum has been computerized/"media-ized" in a highly successful experimental program.

59B 118 A sign of things to come? Perhaps. More and more the medium is becoming "the massage".

60A 119 The "medium is the massage" for LD's, too. In fact, media based instruction is sometime the "yellow brick road" for those students who lack some of the basic communication skills.

60B 120 Instructional TV tapes are available at Richland College on a limited basis as a "spin-off" of the District's instructional TV program.

61A 121 The tapes may serve as a supplement to or in place of the telecasts which are scheduled on the local educational TV station.

61B 122 In addition, the Center houses an "auto-learn" chemistry program, which is a self-paced filmstrip-tape "package", slide-tape psychology program used as supplementray material in regularly scheduled psychology courses,

62A 123 and a variety of miscellaneous video-tape, audiotape, slide-tape, filmstrip programs, dealing with various subject matter areas.

62B 124 Much instructional material has been produced locally with local needs in mind and an overriding concern for effective communication of important concepts in a media base.

63A 125 All of this does not suggest the abolition of scholarship,

63B 126 nor has there been any attempt to "bury" the printed word.

64A 127 Print is alive and well everywhere, but especially in higher education. To ignore that fact would be foolish and unrealistic.

64B 128 It should be apparent that in the approach outlined here there is a great deal of concern for the development of those skills which are associated

65A 129 with education traditionally: reading, writing, and arithemetic.

65B 130 Until there is a radical change in the whole "scene" in higher education, students, even LD's (or maybe especially LD's) will find tremendous advantage in knowing how to function efficiently in an academic environment.

66A 131 Study skills is a high priority concern in dealing with disabled students, and it is safe to assume that they have had little or no formal instruction in that area.

66B 132 At Richland a thirty-hour program has been developed to offer students practical approaches to becoming a deliberate student. Each session is media-based with appropriate involvement activities incorporated into the experience.

67A 133 The program consists of a series of fifty-minute presentations which might be appropriately labeled "workshops" covering such areas as. . .

67B 134 Students may experience the program in one of three ways: in a developmental studies reading class where one-third of class time is devoted to instruction in study skills;

68A 135 individually using packaged programs through the Center for Independent Study;

68B 136 or through a "crash" study skills course offered free on an open class basis to all students who feel the need to become involved.

69A 137 The "crash" program runs a full semester. Any participant is free to attend any number of sessions; there are no formal enrollment requirements.

69B 138 Throughout this discussion a kind of "system" has been implied for dealing with language disabled students.

70A 139 If a system is there, it is certainly a loose, informal one. Such informality can be a disadvantage.

70B 140 For a moment, then, let's take a look at the means by which an effort such as that at Richland College might be strengthened.

71A 141 Materials are always a problem and on the college level there is a great need for the direct expression of important concepts in several levels of difficulty in terms of readability and learning style.

71B 142 Ideally, these concepts would be available in several formats including a media format to offer broad appeal to a <u>variety</u> of learning styles.

72A 143 To complete the picture, such an information bank would be enhanced by an instructional program involving sequential skills and performance criterion based evaluation.

72B 144 Since the learning style of a good many students is supported by one-to-one instruction, the addition of support help--part-time professional tutors--for all courses on campus would be an advantage.

73A 145 Linguists have been telling us for years that all the language skills are interrelated. That seems to suggest that remediation might be

73B 146 most effectively handled through a <u>comprehensive</u> team effort involving the combined expertise of a reading specialist, a writing specialist and perhaps others. It would certainly be valuable to determine the effect of a speech pathologist in a compensatory program.

74A 147 A comprehensive program would probably also operate on a tighter, more highly structured base to achieve a higher level of efficiency.

74B 148 Assuming that is a valid supposition, two needs become immediately apparent. The first is the necessity to add to the staff a specialist in communications disorders who would have the expertise to offer instructional support,

75A 149 provide referral service as needed, and coordinate the total effort.

75B 150 The second, and most important of all, is the need--no, the necessity--for a formal curriculum structure which provides a student in a compensatory program some possibilities beyond Developmental Studies courses.

76A 151 Administration, staff development personnel, and instructional leaders must all become involved if fulfillment of the promise of higher education is to be extended to the Sams in our colleges.

76B 152 After years of the frustration of "blank walls" and dead-end streets in public education,

77A 153 it's time to stop giving lip service to terms like "individualizing instruction", "personalizing education", "humanizing education" and start doing something about them--even in higher education.

77B 154 Sam asks no more than that we meet his needs.

78A 155 As a human being he deserves that; we are obliged to continue to try--even in higher education.

78B 156 You were warned. Nobody has all the answers. There have been few answers here. Lots of questions have been raised though. The questions follow the promise.

79A 157 And the questions will <u>have</u> to be answered--finally, ultimately--even in higher education.